

Press Release

Brooklyn Museum



Photo: Jonathan Dorado, Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum Partners with Project Reset to Allow Individuals Arrested for Low-Level Offenses to Avoid Prosecution through Completing Artist-Led Educational Programs

In a new initiative between the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office and the Center for Court Innovation, the arts education program reimagines the role of museums in transforming lives and communities, and reinforces the Brooklyn Museum's commitment to supporting social justice programs

In a new partnership, the Brooklyn Museum and the Center for Court Innovation's Project Reset will offer arts-based education programs to people charged with low-level misdemeanors, as a means to avoid court and a criminal record. Conducted in partnership with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, Project Reset seeks to provide a more proportionate and meaningful response to low-level offenses by giving individuals the opportunity to avoid prosecution—and the collateral consequences of involvement with the criminal justice system—by completing community-based programs. The new program at the Museum is the first of its kind in Brooklyn, utilizing arts education as a means to support reform of the criminal justice system.

David Berliner, President and Chief Operating Officer, Brooklyn Museum, said, "We're so thrilled to announce this innovative collaboration with the Center for Court Innovation. At the

Brooklyn Museum, we've long been committed to programs that champion social causes, and this partnership provides a meaningful way for the arts to play a unique and critical role in criminal justice reform."

In collaboration with Project Reset, the Brooklyn Museum offers two biweekly sessions—one for young adults up to age 25 and another for adults age 26 and up. During these two-hour lessons developed by Museum staff and arts educators for Project Reset, participants view, analyze, and discuss artworks on view that touch on, and spark dialogue about, themes of agency and defining one's own narrative dialogue. Discussions are led by teaching artists, whose own works center on social justice and prison reform. Participants then work independently to create their own artwork in response to the discussion, reflecting on life choices and reclaiming their own personal narratives, while simultaneously being exposed to art and cultural offerings within their community. The program culminates in an exhibition that highlights participant artwork with the goal of educating the public on the significance and effectiveness of arts-based diversion programs.

Adjoa Jones de Almeida, Director of Education at the Brooklyn Museum, stated, "The Brooklyn Museum has always been committed to innovation and experimentation through the arts. Our education team is committed to reimagining the role of museums in transforming lives and communities, and we are incredibly proud to be partnering with CCI and the DA's office to activate the arts as a vehicle for critical self-reflection, creative expression, and greater social justice."

District Attorney Gonzalez said, "Project Reset aligns with my commitment to reduce our reliance on convictions and incarceration while still holding offenders accountable. This program addresses the conduct of those who commit low-level offenses and confronts the consequences of their actions in a more meaningful way than traditional court sanctions. I am especially proud that we have partnered with the Brooklyn Museum, as involving communities and Brooklyn's incredible cultural institutions as partners in justice is one of my goals as we strive to strengthen fairness and trust. With the forthcoming expansion of Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) arrests under the new criminal justice reform law taking effect next year, this program will help us handle misdemeanors more efficiently and equitably."

Adam Mansky, Director of Criminal Justice at CCI, said, "The Center for Court Innovation is pleased to work with our longtime partner, the Brooklyn DA's Office, to launch Project Reset throughout Brooklyn. Project Reset is a new way of responding to low-level offenders that is appropriate, meaningful, and proportionate, and that wholly avoids the threat of jail, warrant, or conviction. By diverting people out of the criminal justice system and into community-based programming, Project Reset will make justice in Brooklyn more humane and effective. The Center for Court Innovation is grateful to the City Council and Speaker Corey Johnson for supporting this important work."

The **Brooklyn Museum** has been a leader in pioneering arts education programs for nearly a century, and serves over 57,000 children, teens, young adults, seniors, teachers, and caregivers each year. Programs and services for local schools range from guided and self-guided gallery visits to multi-visit school partnerships. Professional development and training programs for teachers and other professionals help educators in all subjects and grade levels to enrich their classes. Youth and family programs begin with children two and three years old and their caregivers and include a wide range of programs. Programs for adults

include Thursday Evenings, First Saturdays, the Museum Education Fellowship Program, academic partnerships, and the Museum Guides Program, as well as programs for audiences with disabilities. The Museum’s education department continues to forge innovative partnerships with organizations that deepen and expand our service mission. Through the generous support of the William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust, the Museum recently completed an initiative to pilot an expanded partnership with two local schools with particularly limited arts resources, with the goal of providing arts education that engages youth around the themes of self-determination and civic action. Over three years, the project aimed to expose students to art education through art integration with core subjects, art-making classes, field trips to the Museum and other cultural sites, and a culminating community festival encouraging students to explore the role and impact of the arts in addressing social inequities of the past and present.

Project Reset started in 2015 as a pilot program in Brooklyn for 17- and 18-year-olds. It has expanded to serve all ages and has been implemented in Manhattan and a number of precincts in the Bronx. Brooklyn is the only borough where all defendants who receive DATs are eligible without restrictions. The program is in alignment with DA Gonzalez’s Justice 2020 plan of action aimed at keeping Brooklyn safe and strengthening community trust by ensuring fairness and equal justice for all. Justice 2020 calls for, among other things, “making jail the alternative.” Project Reset is directed by Senior Assistant District Attorney Karen Varriale, of the District Attorney’s Alternatives to Incarceration Unit, under the overall supervision of Meg Reiss, Chief of Social Justice in the Brooklyn DA’s office.